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## ANNOTATION

Gossen, Timothy J. "Qualities of Lasallian Higher Education." EdD dissertation, Saint Mary's University of Minnesota, 2014. 233 pp.

The author's intent of his research was to focus on "Lasallian higher education within the United States and how the 'Qualities of Lasallian Education' established by the Brothers of the Christian Schools, geographical region of North America, are being expressed" (1). These five qualities were developed as part of a branding initiative and are: 1) teaching methodology based on the spirituality of Saint John Baptist de La Salle, predicated upon personal relationships and a focus on each student's learning needs; 2) faithful to the mission of human and Christian education for the young, especially the poor, for more than three centuries; 3) conducted by the De La Salle Christian Brothers and Lasallian Partners; 4) centered on the Gospel and Catholic values; and, 5) advancement of innovations in teaching, technology, and scholarship (208). The qualitative case study utilized both personal interviews of top-tier administrators and document analysis of university materials, which assisted "in determining how the qualities are being manifested and in what ways there is a void" (4). As there is little scholarly research on how the Lasallian charism is manifested at higher education institutions, this research was significant to better understand what is and is not occurring and could invoke a sharing of best practices (8).

The review of the literature (16-70) focused on three specific areas: 1) the Catholic Church, Catholic education, the Lasallian heritage, periods of change within the Church since 1965, the role of the laity, and sustaining Lasallian mission; 2) higher education, Catholic higher education, Lasallian higher education, and top-tier administration in higher education; and, 3) succession planning and Lasallian statistics, branding, and District assessment (16-17). Using works by Salm and Short, the researcher details that Lasallian education "was and continues to be practical, hands-on, and never stagnant" (25). According to Hotek, lay dedicated individuals are being asked to be part of a movement of "renewal, commitment, and shared mission" to ensure both the mission and the continuation of schools (28). The researcher found that if the changes that affected the Catholic Church post 1965 had not occurred, this study may not have been needed (30). The lack of vocations shaped the importance being placed on formation programs throughout the Lasallian world and the mission can be lived out in different ways (36). The researcher found that "the mission should be read, reflected upon, and lived out, not just something that is reviewed once in a while or just hanging in a frame on the wall" (40). The final section of the literature review focused on Catholic higher education, which "should demonstrate foundational Catholic traits, such as sensitivity for social justice, seeking knowledge, open-mindedness, and critical thought" (48). When describing Lasallian Catholic higher education, "the Christian Brothers purchased colleges to assist with their need of educating their own and at the same time brought with them the concept of 'teaching as a vocation,' which ultimately assisted the other students who were attending the college" (56). The remainder of the literature review focused on succession planning (61), the statistics for the Lasallian Region (65), the Lasallian branding initiative (67) and the Lasallian self-study and assessment being implemented in one District (69).

The researcher designed one research question and follow-up questions that were administered to top-tier administrators at five Lasallian institutions of higher education in the United States (72). The qualitative study was comprised of in-person interviews using the technology of *GoTo Meeting* or phone call, as well as a review of documents from each of the institutions (75). The researcher interviewed twenty-three administrators and the document “The Qualities of Lasallian Education” was the foundational document for the research question (77). Administrators were ranked by level of importance and relevance (83) as well as the documents received (85) and were checked for consistency by a panel of experts (87). A triangular approach (researcher’s reflective notes, coder’s findings from the interviews, and coder’s findings from the documents) were implemented when analyzing the data collected (92). After being provided training and a manual (93), a panel of coders assisted in the coding and identified themes of both the interviews and the documents (95). The researcher also conducted a pilot study prior to advancing to the full study (102). The findings were found, first, by collecting data from the rubrics of the interviews and documents; next, by consolidating “like” information institutionally, and finally, by consolidating the themes collectively as one single source.

Gossen found that schools were doing well with the first three Qualities of Lasallian Education and had the most examples reported by the participants, while qualities four and five had fewer examples of ways the quality was manifested (106). The central themes found in supporting the first quality were: the Lasallian educator, the diverse needs of the students, relationships, and the educational experience (107). The themes supporting the second quality were: continuing the mission, addressing the needs of the students, community outreach, and funding (112). For the third quality, the following themes were identified: the Lasallian reality in the twenty-first century, the significant and emerging role of lay partners, programs that promote the Lasallian mission, and university governance (116). The themes for quality four were: Catholic identity, faith development, and religious curriculum (121). Finally, the themes for the fifth quality were: a culture of innovative education centers, institutes, and partnerships (125).

This study provided much needed data in support of the programs that promote the Lasallian mission, continuing the mission, and funding (131). Most of the participants indicated the universities look a lot different than they did decades ago, since the Christian Brothers are no longer found in every office and classroom (132). But with the programs in place, the charism is being lived in a new manner. The research was significant because it shows that “The Qualities of Lasallian Education” are present in five Lasallian institutions of higher education, though each in their own unique way (135). Future research could be focused on the Region’s high schools and middle schools to determine the extent they are animating the Qualities (144) and/or return to the universities and focus on middle-tier administrators and/or students to ask the same research question (146).